

A TEXAS ADVISORY COUNCIL ON **ARSON**

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For Immediate Release

April 3, 2007

Donated Smoke Alarms Saves Elderly Couple

The sound of smoke alarms interrupted the afternoon nap of an elderly couple in New Braunfels, Texas on Sunday and firefighters say it saved their lives.

Firefighters in the south central Texas city of New Braunfels say a fire started in the home's attic spewing flames and smoke through out the house. Ed Hill, 94, and his wife, Nancy, 92, were awakened by smoke alarms going off in the home. Mrs. Hill immediately called the fire department and then both began working their way out of the house.

The attic and one portion of the home were in flames when firefighters arrived. Mrs. Hill had made it out of the house and emergency personnel had to assist Mr. Hill in getting him out.

"There is no doubt in my mind that we would have had a fire fatality had it not been for the smoke alarms," said Darren Brinkkoeter, a battalion chief with the New Braunfels Fire Department.

The Hills were one of approximately 100 families who were given smoke alarms this past year in a coordinated effort to install smoke alarms in the homes of elderly and low income families in cities designated by the State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO) as having high fire fatalities.

The Insurance Council of Texas in cooperation with First Alert, the Miller and Miller Insurance Agency in New Braunfels, the SFMO and the New Braunfels Fire Department were all involved in the smoke alarm give away entitled, "**We're Out to Alarm Texas.**"

The donated smoke alarms are placed into the hands of firefighters who install the alarms on a requested basis. Firefighters also make a security check on existing smoke alarms and point out potential fire hazards in each home.

"**We're Out to Alarm Texas**" has been responsible for placing more than a thousand smoke alarms into homes in New Braunfels, Lockhart, Waco, Mansfield, El Paso, Galveston and Farmers Branch.

This was the second time in the past six months that a donated smoke alarm has possibly saved a life. On October 23, 2006, a 62 year old disabled Waco woman was alerted by her donated smoke alarm to a fire in her home. She, too, was able to escape unharmed.

The Insurance Council of Texas is the largest insurance trade association in the state consisting of more than 500 property and casualty insurers writing business in Texas.

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